

Challenges and Opportunities of Developing Students' Communicative Competence: A Case of Grade 12 Students in Each of the Selected Schools from the Three Closest Zones to Mizan Town

Belay Girma

*Basic Courses Department, Ambo University Woliso Campus, P.O. Box: 217
Email: girma2002@gmail.com*

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenges and opportunities of developing students' communicative competence. To this end, a total of three schools from three different zones such as Sheka, Bench-Maji and Kafa were selected as a study area. To gather the valuable information from the subjects, two instruments, a test for students and questionnaires for both teachers and students were used. To select the sample subjects, purposive sampling and systematic sampling techniques were used for teachers and students, respectively. The result of the study has shown that the students' communicative competence that was inferred from their performance was an "average" or it was in "good" scale. Furthermore, the test result showed that the students mean score value of their communicative competence is 53.15 with the standard deviation of 9.8 from the result, and the students' linguistic competence is the least and below average value while the students' discourse competence and strategic competence were medium. The students' sociolinguistic competence was higher than average. However, the students and teachers' responses showed that lack of practice in all macro language skills, students' shyness and being passive, lack of exposure to English speakers, lack of technology assisted language learning, first language dominance and lack of interest were the main challenges to the development of students' communicative competence. The finding also indicated that students have very limited number of opportunities such as only those related to teachers and textbooks. Finally, based on the results obtained, EFL teachers should have clear understanding about goals of language teaching and CLT principles' implementation especially in teaching grammar inductively and in using language for meaningful communication and the ministry of education should provide necessary periodic trainings for EFL teachers on CLT principle implementations to improve the students' communicative competence.

Key words: Communicative competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, challenges, opportunities.

Introduction

Before it becomes an international language today, English language has passed through different stages of development. For instance, Language teaching became a profession in the 20th century (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Brown, 2000, Nunan, 1989; 1991). However, there were different goals for which this language was taught to the students. For instance, during the era of grammar translation method, English language was taught to students only to develop their reading proficiency and while in other method to develop only oral proficiency of students (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). After 1970s, the goal of teaching language became to develop learners' communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Consequently, today, English language is taught to world

citizens having this goal. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, Richards, 2006). This is the goal beyond the mastery of structure and oral proficiency, for it focuses on meaning exchange and appropriateness of the context and the forms, and for it gives the learners the chance to use the target language based on its functions rather than forms only (Sreehari, 2012, Canale, 1983).

In Ethiopian, English language was first taught to some Ethiopians in 1908 with the aim of communicating the fate of the country with regard to sovereignty with other foreigners (Getachew and Derib, 2006). After that time onwards, English language teaching was continued. Today, it is taught as a subject from grade one and is a medium of instruction of secondary schools and all universities that ought to produce documents, hold meetings, write

minutes and reports, etc. in English. Similarly, the role of English in Ethiopia in private organizations and some governmental sectors is also high (Amlaku, 2010). Nevertheless, English language teaching and learning in Ethiopia had been carried out in teacher-centered approach before the country has started implementing CLT methods since 2002 E.C. With this regard, MOE (2002:29) put it as follows.

Unlike the old educational system, which was teacher-centered and solely conducted (with) by the chalk and talk mode of delivery, the present system is student-centered with emphasis on various exercises, student-teacher interaction, and encouragement of student inquisitiveness. ...The mode of delivery has also been designed to produce students capable of solving problems.

As a result, text books, reference books and the nature of the tasks have been designed as per the principles of CLT. However, as some studies by MOE (2002) and others showed the students' performance in all educational levels is low and below average. Besides, the researcher observed many university students who have problems of writing, speaking and expressing their ideas in English language. Other research findings on CLT also revealed the presence factors such as the presence of difficulties related students' proficiency level, time constraints, parents and schools, instructional materials, teachers' commitment, educational system, CLT itself and difficulties related to the support and poverty (Farooq 2015; Feyera 2014; Aydin 2012; Aschalew 2012; Nguyen *et al.* 2014; Mosha 2014).

Thus, these situations which related to communicative competence and found being problems on the part of learners and teachers, should be investigated and their causes should be known. That was why this study was also planned. It was planned to identify the challenges of students in their struggle to develop their communicative competence and to see if there were opportunities available for them.

Materials and Methods

This study used quantitative survey type of research design. This was because the research involved quantitative data that were collected through test and questionnaires. In this study, the students and EFL teachers of the three selected secondary schools from three different zones close to Mizan town were the subjects of the study. These schools were Mizan secondary and preparatory school in Mizan, Bench Maji zone, Tepi secondary and preparatory school in Tepi, Sheka zone and Bishaw W/Yohannes secondary and preparatory school in Bonga, Kafa zone. There were 14 (12M, 2F), 8 (8M, 0F), and 9 (7M, 2F) EFL teachers in each of the above schools respectively. The total number of the EFL teachers was 31 and these EFL teachers were purposively selected from the three selected schools. In the selected schools, there were seven to eleven sections that contain 50 to 70 students. The total number of the students at the time was 1500 and out this, 150 students or 10% of the total population of the study were selected using systematic sampling. By taking the average number for the three schools, 50 students from each schools were selected based their ID number using equal n^{th} interval from each available sections in the schools in the way that it makes the total population number.

In this study, two main data gathering tools were employed. These were questionnaire (for both teachers and students) and a test (for the students). Both close-ended and open-ended questionnaire were prepared for both students and teachers. Generally, there were six main close-ended items with three open ended items. The data obtained from the test result of the students were analyzed quantitatively and they were sorted out based on the types of competence and put into their order of frequency from the highest to the lowest score. Then, using simple statistics such as the percentage, the mean, the mode, the median and the standard deviation were done. This was because it made easy to see the highest, and the lowest scores and their average to decide in which area the students were competent and in which areas they were not. In addition, the dispersion of the data could also be seen well by using Standard deviation to see the homogeneities that existed among the students' scores.

Besides this, the scale of the Ethiopian higher institutions entrance adapted from NAFSA

(2010) Online Guide to Educational System around the world-Ethiopia was used to put the result of the students in the scale.

Grading Scale: Ethiopian Higher education Entrance Qualification certificate 75-100 = Excellent, 50-62 = Good, 63-74 = Very good, 25-49 = Satisfactory, and Below 25 = poor. Similarly, according to IEASA (International Education Association Of south Africa) report, 2008 of the conference papers on “the educational System of Ethiopia” the grading scale for secondary school is put like this: 90-100 = Excellent, 80-89 = Very good, 60-79 =

Satisfactory, 50-59 = Average, and 0-49 = Failure.

The above scale is also found on the students’ result cards that are given for promotion for students at the end of each academic Year. On top of this, the fact sheets that are found on the official websites of the Ethiopian Ministry of education put that 50% is the average result that has been commonly used in the analysis of the test result throughout the country.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Students’ test result put in order from the highest to the lowest for easy understanding of the data

SN	Communicative competence			Linguistic Competence			Sociolinguistic Competence			Discourse Competence			Rank
	Code	Test result in Number (60)	Test result in (%)	Code	Test result in (20)	Test result in (%)	Code	Test result in Number (20)	Test result in (%)	Code	Test result in Number (20)	Test result in (%)	
1	Bong	49	81.67	Bong	16	80	Bong	19	95	Bong	17	85	1 st
2	Bong	49	81.67	Bong	16	80	Tepi	19	95	Bong	17	85	2 nd
3	Bong	49	81.67	Bong	16	80	Tepi	19	95	Bong	17	85	3 rd
4	Bong	47	78.34	Bong	16	80	Bong	18	90	Bong	16	80	4 th
5	Bong	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Bong	16	80	5 th
6	Bong	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Bong	16	80	6 th
7	Bong	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Mizan	16	80	7 th
8	Bong	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Tepi	16	80	8 th
9	Mizan	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Tepi	16	80	9 th
10	Tepi	47	78.34	Bong	15	75	Bong	17	85	Bong	15	75	10 th
51	Tepi	39	65	Bong	11	55	Bong	14	70	Mizan	13	65	51 st
52	Bong	38	63.34	Bong	11	55	Tepi	14	70	Tepi	13	65	52 nd
53	Bong	38	63.34	Bong	11	55	Tepi	14	70	Tepi	13	65	53 rd
54	Mizan	38	63.34	Mizan	11	55	Tepi	14	70	Tepi	13	65	54 th
55	Tepi	38	63.34	Mizan	11	55	Bong	13	65	Bong	12	60	55 th
56	Bong	37	61.67	Mizan	11	55	Bong	13	65	Bong	12	60	56 th
57	Bong	37	61.67	Mizan	11	55	Bong	13	65	Bong	12	60	57 th
58	Mizan	36	60	Mizan	11	55	Mizan	13	65	Bong	12	60	58 th
59	Bong	35	58.34	Tepi	11	55	Mizan	13	65	Mizan	12	60	59 th
60	Tepi	35	58.34	Tepi	11	55	Mizan	13	65	Mizan	12	60	60 th
137	Mizan	17	28.34	Mizan	5	25	Mizan	4	20	Tepi	6	30	137 th
138	Tepi	17	28.34	Tepi	5	25	Mizan	4	20	Mizan	5	25	138 th
139	Tepi	17	28.34	Tepi	5	25	Tepi	4	20	Mizan	5	25	139 th
140	Tepi	17	28.34	Mizan	4	20	Tepi	4	20	Mizan	5	25	140 th
141	Mizan	16	26.67	Tepi	4	20	Tepi	4	20	Tepi	5	25	141 st
142	Mizan	16	26.67	Tepi	4	20	Tepi	3	15	Tepi	5	25	142 nd
143	Tepi	15	25	Mizan	3	15	Tepi	3	15	Tepi	5	25	143 rd
144	Mizan	14	23.34	Tepi	3	15	Mizan	2	10	Mizan	4	20	144 th
145	Mizan	12	20	Tepi	3	15	Tepi	2	10	Tepi	4	20	145 th
146	Tepi	12	20	Tepi	2	10	Tepi	2	10	Mizan	2	10	146 th

As Table 1 demonstrated results of the students, the lowest point that students scored in three competence areas (linguistic, sociolinguistic

and discourse) is the same for all which is 2 points out of 20 (10%). However, the highest point is different for all the three competence

areas. These are the sociolinguistic 19(95%), the discourse 17(85%) and Linguistics 16 (80%). According to the data, the students have scored the highest points in sociolinguistic competence followed by the discourse competence and linguistic competence

respectively. In the above table out of orderly listed test results only top ten from highest, medium and from the lowest is displayed though the results were put in rank from 1st to 146th.

Table 2. Stastical indication of the students' test result

SN	units	Communicative Competence		Linguistic Competence		Sociolinguistic Competence		Discourse Competence	
		Test result in		Test result in		Test result in		Test Result in	
		Number	Percent	Number	percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	Mean	32.37	53.95	9.94	49.72	11.24	56.21	11.18	55.89
2	Median	32	53.34	10	50	11	55	11	55
3	Mode	42	70	9	45	17	85	15	75
4	STDEV	9.8	16.3	3.36	16.79	4.45	22.22	3.30	16.50

As it can be seen from Table 2, the mean of the communicative competence is above the average (53.95%). This is average result as per the criteria set by the country (MOE, 2002). However, the highest mean also shows the highest competence and thus accordingly, the students' results in sociolinguistic competence has shown that the highest 11.24(56.21%), followed by the mean of discourse competence 11.18 (55.89%) and the mean of linguistic competence 9.94 (49.72%). The mean of the linguistic competence is below 50% and this can signal that students are less competent in this area.

Besides, the highest mode is also 17 (85%) and it is the mode of the sociolinguistic competence and this shows that there are many students who have sociolinguistic competence. The mode of the linguistic competence is 9 (45%) and it is

also below the average (50%) and this shows that the students have problems in their linguistic competence.

Based on the average result of students in each competence, the students whose score is below average in communicative competence are 71 (48.6%), linguistic competence 70 (47.95%), sociolinguistic competence 69 (47.26%), and in discourse competence 61 (41.78%). This also shows that the students' number whose competence are at least below average or with pass mark are very close to 50%. This indicates how much seriously the students' performance is getting low and that the students' communicative competence which can be inferred from this students' performance is found to be low.

Table 3. Students' test result based on the scale set by MOE according to NAFSA (2010) for EHEEQC

SN	Scale	Value Given	Communicative competence		Linguistic competence		Sociolinguistic competence		Discourse competence	
			Test result in		Test result in		Test result in		Test Result in	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	75-100	Excellent	20	13.69	18	12.33	46	31.51	31	21.23
2	63-74	Very good	35	23.97	21	14.38	19	13.01	23	15.75
3	50-62	Good	29	19.86	37	25.34	22	15.07	51	34.93
4	25-49	Satisfactory	62	42.47	70	47.95	59	40.41	41	28.08
Average			53.95		49.72		56.21		55.89	

The data dispersion as shown in the table above is that the students' communicative competence result is dispersed in about 9.8 (16.3%). As

STDEV is approaching to zero, it means that the results are almost similar, but as STDEV of this data shows there is a great difference between

the performances of each student (which is about 16.3%). Thus, it is possible to say that the students have very great differences among

themselves in relation to their communicative competences.

As it can be seen from Table 3, the test results of the students' communicative competence had an average result of (53.95%) and this is found in the scale of "Good" and out of this, 62(42.47%) is satisfactory, 29 (19.86%) is Good, 35 (23.97%) is Very Good and 20 (13.67%) is

Excellent. With regard to this, the fact sheet on the Website of MOE and IEASA (2008) indicates that the students' result which is 50% and above is considered as an average or pass mark.

Table 4. The comparison of the average of results on how both teachers and students leveled students' language ability based on the set statements

SN	Types of competence	Levels by the students themselves		St...stand for students Tr=for teachers						
		Levels	Average point	Average by Ranks						
				By students		High		Medium		Low
St	Tr	St	Tr	St	Tr	St	Tr	St	Tr	
1	Linguistic competence related points	High & V. High	31.89%	17.94%	4 th	4 th	1 st	2 nd	2 nd	2 nd
		Medium	42.56%	48.72%						
		Low & V.Low	25.56%	33.34%						
2	Sociolinguistic competence related points	High & V. High	55.69%	38.46%	1 st	1 st	4 th	1 st	4 th	4 th
		Medium	33.24%	64.10%						
		Low & V. Low	11.07%	11.54%						
3	Discourse competence related points	High & V. High	36.81%	17.95%	2 nd	3 rd	2 nd	4 th	3 rd	1 st
		Medium	43.82%	38.46%						
		Low&V.Low	19.37%	43.59%						
4	Strategic competence related points	High & V. High	36.36%	35.89%	3 rd	2 nd	3 rd	3 rd	1 st	3 rd
		Medium	37.09%	39.75%						
		Low & V. Low	26.84%	25.64%						

As it can be read from Table 4, both the students and the teachers in their responses ranked the sociolinguistic competence related points in high and very high levels as 1st and at the same time both of them ranked the students' linguistic competence as the 4th under the low and very low levels. It is also shown that both respondent groups reported that the students' linguistic competence related points ranked 4th or last as compared to the others. The students' strategic competence related points are ranked medium by both respondents, and the responses of both respondent groups indicated that the average rank of strategic and discourse competence is similar on high and very high levels as well as on very low and low levels. Hence, it is possible to say that the students have similar competence in these two competences which is an average or medium one. Based on this, it is possible to rank the students' sociolinguistic competence as 1st, followed by strategic and discourse competence

and the linguistic competence as the fourth ranked competence. This finding also collocates with the test result of the students in which students did well in sociolinguistic and very less or below average on their linguistic competence.

Generally, the students' communicative competence is said to be in the "Average" or "Good" scale (Table 4). Similarly, the average of students' result in both sociolinguistic and discourse competences also are found in "Good" scale, but the students test result in linguistic competence showed that it is below average or found in satisfactory scale. Thus, as these data revealed, the students' performance result showed that their communicative competence should be improved as it is very close to the pass mark or in Good scale, and special attention should be given for students' linguistic competence for it seems neglected or improperly taught.

Table 5. Students' and teachers' responses on the opportunities that are available in teaching and learning of English language

SN	Items	Alternatives	No of response		No of respondents		Percent		Average
			Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
1	The presence of relevant and enough number of grammar books	Yes No	81 57	8 5	138 138	13 13	58.69 41.30	61.54 38.46	60.12 39.88
2	The inclusion of enough and authentic grammar activities in the books	Yes No	78 59	11 2	137 137	13 13	56.93 43.07	84.62 15.38	70.78 29.23
3	The presence of EFL teacher who know grammar well	Yes No	92 45	10 3	137 137	13 13	67.15 32.85	76.92 23.08	72.04 27.96
4	The presence of experienced teachers in teaching grammar /time-context/	Yes No	112 26	8 5	138 138	13 13	81.16 18.84	61.54 38.46	71.35 28.65
5	The presence of enough time to practice the grammar items	Yes No	74 64	3 10	138 138	13 13	53.62 46.38	23.08 76.92	38.35 61.65
6	The students high interest to learn grammar	Yes No	94 39	4 9	133 133	13 13	70.68 29.32	30.77 69.23	50.73 49.28
7	The EFL Teacher high interest to teach grammar	Yes No	85 46	6 8	131 131	14 14	64.89 35.11	42.86 57.14	53.88 46.13
8	The use of active learning and teaching methods for grammar /inductive- to deductive/	Yes No	84 47	9 5	131 131	14 14	64.12 35.88	64.29 35.71	64.21 35.80
9	The presence of integrated practice tasks	Yes No	81 51	12 2	132 132	14 14	61.36 38.64	85.71 14.29	73.54 26.47
10	The presence of communication strategies in the student textbooks	Yes No	90 43	10 4	133 133	14 14	67.67 32.33	71.43 28.57	69.55 30.45
11	The presence of English language speaking community outside class	Yes No	68 65	5 9	133 133	14 14	51.13 48.87	35.71 64.29	43.42 56.58
12	Teacher knowledge about the culture of English language	Yes No	73 60	4 9	133 133	13 13	54.89 45.11	30.77 69.23	42.83 57.17
13	The students high interest to learn English language culture	Yes No	76 57	7 7	133 133	14 14	57.14 42.86	50 50	53.57 46.43
14	The EFL teachers interest to teach the culture of English language	Yes No	66 66	6 7	132 132	13 13	50 50	46.15 53.85	48.08 51.93
15	The teachers ability to write coherent and effective text	Yes No	82 51	12 2	133 133	14 14	61.65 38.35	85.71 14.29	73.68 26.32
16	The EFL teachers enough knowledge on how to organize texts	Yes No	84 47	12 1	131 131	13 13	64.12 35.88	92.31 7.69	78.22 21.79
17	The EFL teachers high awareness and skill of implementing CLT	Yes No	91 43	11 3	134 134	14 14	67.91 32.09	78.57 21.43	73.24 26.76
18	The presence of high students interest to speak English correctly	Yes No	73 58	9 5	131 131	14 14	55.73 44.27	64.29 35.71	60.01 39.99
19	The presence of EFL teachers who encourage learning by making error	Yes No	75 59	9 5	134 134	14 14	55.97 44.03	64.29 35.71	60.13 39.87
20	The presence of EFL teachers who teach English in contextualized way	Yes No	90 41	11 3	131 131	14 14	68.70 31.29	78.57 21.43	73.64 26.36
21	The students' high interest of using body language while speaking English	Yes No	82 51	10 4	133 133	14 14	61.65 38.35	71.43 28.57	66.54 33.46
22	The presence of using body language culture on the part of EFL teachers	Yes No	75 59	7 7	134 134	14 14	55.97 44.03	50 50	52.99 47.02
23	The presence of EFL teachers who speak and write fluently in English	Yes No	80 52	10 4	132 132	14 14	60.61 39.39	71.43 28.57	66.02 33.98
24	The presence of rich authentic contexts to teach English language in classroom	Yes No	85 48	8 6	133 133	14 14	63.91 36.09	57.14 42.86	60.53 39.48
25	The presence of written feedback given to students on their writing tasks, essays	Yes No	88 46	11 3	134 134	14 14	65.67 34.33	78.57 21.43	72.12 27.88

The data in Table 5 shows that the opportunities that are available to the students are very limited in number. Many of these opportunities are related to the teachers' activities, knowledge, and experiences while others of them related to

students' textbook or material related items which pave the way for the development of students' communicative competence.

Table 6a. Students' and teachers' responses on the challenges that they face in teaching and learning

SN	Items	Alternatives	No of response		No of Respondents		Percent (%)		Average
			Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
1	Shortage of enough number of EFL teachers	Yes	72	5	138	13	52.17	38.46	45.32
		No	66	8	138	13	47.83	61.54	54.69
2	Shortage of text books and reference books	Yes	83	4	140	13	59.29	30.77	45.03
		No	57	9	140	13	40.71	69.23	54.97
3	Lack of exposure to English speaking community	Yes	117	12	140	13	83.57	92.31	87.94
		No	23	1	140	13	16.43	7.69	12.06
4	Lack of enough speaking practices in the class	Yes	118	13	139	13	84.89	100	92.45
		No	21	0	139	13	15.11	0	7.56
5	Lack of Commitment to practice writing	Yes	93	12	138	13	67.39	92.31	79.85
		No	45	1	138	13	32.61	7.69	20.15
6	The much time taken by teachers presentation	Yes	77	7	138	13	55.79	53.85	54.82
		No	62	6	138	13	44.93	46.15	45.54
7	Students' lack of interest to learn English	Yes	69	12	140	13	49.29	92.31	70.8
		No	71	1	140	13	50.71	7.69	29.2
8	Students lack of awareness why they learn English	Yes	76	10	138	13	55.07	76.92	65.99
		No	63	3	138	13	45.65	23.08	34.37
9	Students' need, not to make mistake in their communication	Yes	76	9	139	13	54.68	69.23	61.96
		No	63	4	139	13	45.32	30.77	38.05
10	Student centered approach without enough materials required	Yes	83	10	137	13	60.58	76.92	68.75
		No	54	3	137	13	39.42	23.08	31.25
11	Teachers focus on grammar than on meaningcommunication	Yes	82	6	140	13	58.57	46.15	52.36
		No	58	7	140	13	41.43	53.85	47.64
12	students' awareness as passive receptor rather than active	Yes	97	13	138	13	70.29	100	85.15
		No	41	0	138	0	29.71	0	14.86

Table 6b. Students' and teachers' responses on the challenges that they face in teaching and learning English language.

SN	Items	Alternatives	No of response		No of Respondents		Percent (%)		Average
			Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
13	Teachers lack of CLT method practice in their classes	Yes	88	9	139	13	63.31	69.23	66.27
		No	51	4	139	13	36.69	30.77	33.73
14	Lack of teachers awareness about their students need	Yes	81	6	137	13	59.12	46.15	52.64
		No	56	7	137	13	40.88	53.85	47.37
15	Students need to learn only the grammar part	Yes	40	10	135	13	29.63	76.92	53.28
		No	95	3	135	13	70.37	23.08	46.73
16	Students failure to be good in either spoken or written fluency	Yes	84	8	138	13	60.87	61.54	61.21
		No	54	5	138	13	39.13	38.46	38.80
17	Students lack of exposure to technology assisted language learning	Yes	94	8	137	13	68.61	61.54	65.08
		No	43	5	137	13	31.39	38.46	34.93
18	Teachers lack of base (quality) when presenting the language item	Yes	76	6	137	13	55.47	46.15	50.81
		No	61	7	137	13	44.53	53.85	49.19
19	Students' low language understanding ability	Yes	96	9	137	13	70.07	69.23	69.65
		No	41	4	137	13	29.93	30.77	30.35
20	Students lack of reading experience	Yes	80	11	138	13	57.97	84.62	71.30
		No	58	2	138	13	42.03	15.38	28.71
21	Students failure to be good in grammatical structure accuracy	Yes	88	6	136	13	64.71	46.15	55.43
		No	48	7	136	13	35.29	53.85	44.57
22	Lack of appropriate teaching Aids and teaching contexts	Yes	90	4	136	13	66.18	30.77	48.48
		No	48	9	136	13	35.29	69.23	52.26
23	Shyness of students to speak in English and lack of motivation	Yes	93	12	139	13	66.91	92.31	79.61
		No	46	1	139	13	33.09	7.69	20.39
24	Students' first language influence or dominance	Yes	97	8	139	13	69.78	61.54	65.66
		No	42	5	139	13	30.22	38.46	34.34
25	Teachers' disability to implement communicative activities in class	Yes	71	6	138	13	51.45	46.15	48.80
		No	67	7	138	13	48.55	53.85	51.2

As it is revealed in the Table 6a and Table 6b, the main challenges that faced in developing students' communicative competence were reported by both teachers and students as lack of practice in the macro language skills which has the highest average, followed by lack of exposure to English speaking community, being passive in the class, students' shyness, first language influence, shortage of teaching materials and students' lack of interest to learn the language respectively.

Based on the purpose of this study, and the planned research procedures, the following research analyses were carried out and the following research results were obtained. Data about the communicative competence were gathered from both teachers and students to identify the opportunities available to the students and the challenges that the students face in their attempts to develop their communicative competence. In order to evaluate the students' linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences, a test (entrance exam of grade of 12 students from 2001 to 2006 E.C) containing sixty items was selected and administered to the students. This is to see the students' performance and to infer or deduce their communicative competence from the test result. At the beginning, the test was administered to the students and then the questionnaires were distributed to both the teachers and the students. The test results were marked and calculated in percentage.

The students' responses on why they learn English language showed that they learn English to master the four macro skills of language (listening (93.53%), writing (92.91%), reading (92.85%) and speaking (85.61%)) and to use it for communication (87.68%). The data also showed that the majority of the respondents were learning English to a very great and to a great extent in order to read (78.26%), listen (72.27%), speak (65.47%), write (61.87%) and to communicate in English (62.32%).

When the respondents were asked to level their language abilities, they have leveled their abilities as very high and high in greeting and introducing themselves to 100 (72.46%), in using formal and informal expressions to 71 (51.45%) and in never afraid of making error in English to 71 (51.07%). In all other areas, the

students have leveled themselves to below 50%, and the least item level is knowing the culture of English language (15.22%) followed by speak as per the culture of English (22.85%).

As it is indicated in Table 6, the students have chosen the following most frequent challenges such as lack of enough speaking practices in the class (84.89%), lack of exposure to English speaking community (83.57), and students' awareness as passive receiver rather than active participants (70.29%). Furthermore, the students also pointed out the opportunities such as, the presence of experienced EFL teachers (81.16%), students' high interest to learn grammar (70%), and the presence of EFL teachers who teach English in contextualized way (68.70%). However, many of the opportunities reported were related to teachers and the presence of students' textbooks.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The students' communicative competence is not to be measured (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) rather to be inferred from students' performance. According to the test result of the students, their performance showed that the mean score is 53.23%. This score is an average result and it was also found in the scale of "good". The students' communicative competence is very close to the minimum requirement or passes mark and it is difficult to say that the students' competence is enough. Rather, it can be said that the students' competence is not well developed and that it needs further improvement. Thus, with this regard, teachers should know and work for achieving the goal of language teaching and the students should also be informed that they are learning language to use it for meaningful communication rather than for reading only (Canale, M. & Swain, M. 1980). Especially, the linguistic competence of the students was below average, and this demonstrates that the teaching of linguistic forms, which should be done inductively, is either neglected or improperly taught.

As to the challenges found in the discussion, lack of practice in speaking and writing has been emphasized. To master the skills, all the macro language skills should be practiced from the beginning as per the current language teaching approach. Knowing this, students should make

practice on all macro skills from early grades and teacher should also provide them with communicative activities by assigning enough time. The finding also indicated that the opportunities that students get to develop their communicative competence were limited to that of teachers and text books. The case of students' opportunities can be discussed in relation to the opportunities that the CLT has brought with it such as giving learners opportunities to manage their own learning which in turn gave CLT an acceptance all over the world (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Hence, both teachers and students should implement the principles of CLT to get benefit from it. The ministry of education should revise the teaching materials and work hard for the practicality of the CLT principles which directly contributes to the developments of the learners' communicative competence.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges Mizan-Tepi University for funding this research and all EFL teachers and students in the selected schools of the three zones for their contribution to this study.

References

- Amlaku B. E. (2010). Language policies and the role of English in Ethiopia: A presentation paper at the 23rd Annual Conference of IATEFL BESIG (19-21 Nov.), Bielefeld, Germany.
- Aschalew T. (2012). Teachers' perceptions and practices of active learning in Haramaya University, Eastern Ethiopia: The Case of Faculty of Education: /STAR journal/Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Oct-Dec 2012, 1(4):74-83
- Aydin S. (2012). Factors causing demotivation in EFL teaching process: A Case Study. The Qualitative Report; Volume 17, Article 101
- Brown H. D. (2000). Principles of language learning and teaching (4th ed.). White Plains, N.Y.: Longman.
- Canale M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. Richards, & R. Schmidt (eds.), *Language and Communication*, 2-27. London: Longman. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/37.2.111>
- Canale M., and Swain M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, I(1), 1-47.
- Farooq M. (2015). Creating a communicative language teaching environment for improving Students communicative competence at EFL/EAP University Level: *International Education Studies*; Vol. 8, No. 4, Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education.
- Feyera B. (2014). Major factors that affect grade 10 students' academic achievement inscience education at Ilu Aba Bora General Secondary of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia: *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 32, 118-134.
- Getachew A. and Derib A. (2006). Language policy in Ethiopia: History and Current Trends. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 2, 37-62
- Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative competence. J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (eds.) *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- IEASA. (2008). The Educational system of Ethiopia. 12th Annual Conference from August 27-30
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* Oxford: OUP.
- MOE. (2002). Education sector development program II (ESDP II), Addis Ababa: MOE
- Mosha M. (2014). Factors affecting students' performance in English language in Zanzibar rural and urban secondary schools: *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.5, No.35,
- NAFSA (2010). Online guide to educational systems around the World-Ethiopia. Association of International Educators.
- Nguyen H. (2014) Factors affecting English language teaching and learning in higher education: *English Language Teaching*; Vol. 7, No. 8, Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education.
- Nunan D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Nunan D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.
- Richards J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*.
[http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/com.language teaching today](http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/com.language%20teaching%20today).
- Richards J. C., and Theodore R. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Second Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sreehari P. (2012). *Communicative language teaching: possibilities and problems*. English language teaching; Vol. 5, No. 12; 2012, Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education.